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THE CHICKENS
OF
FOWL FARM

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To

M. Joseph Rogers

With Prudent regards from

the Authoress.

Book 4 Section 19

NAS

Burndale

THE CHICKENS OF FOWL FARM

A STORY

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BY

LENA E. BARKSDALE

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By Lena E. Barksdale.

PREFACE.

I have written this little chicken book in the past few months, and now on my eleventh birthday the story is finished.

The "other critters" have talked to the world through "Uncle Remus." The horses through "Black Beauty"; now I wish to give the chickens a chance.

Most of them I write of are members of my own family, so I know them well.

L. E. B.

August 22d, 1898.

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THE CHICKENS OF FOWL FARM.

CHAPTER FIRST.

A TALK IN THE CHICKENYARD.

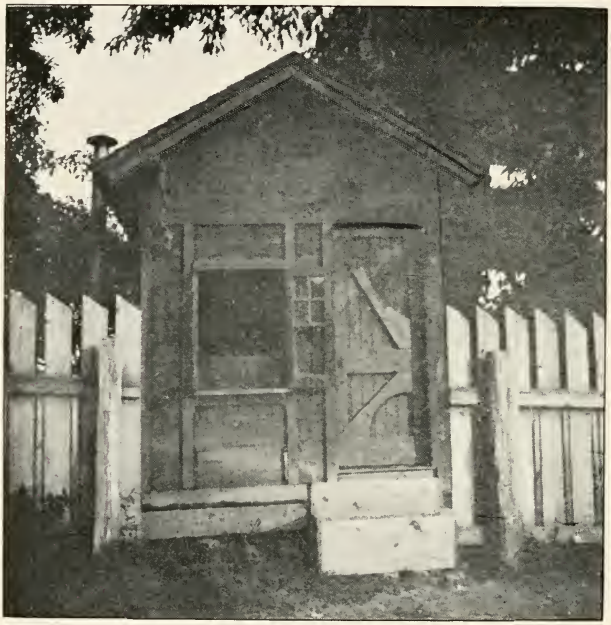
"Why is it, I would like to know," said young Scratchfoot, throwing the sand over himself, "that every one is talking and carrying on of a hot Summer day the very time you ought to go to sleep?"

"Hush up, Scratchfoot," said Topknot, "we are having a very lively conversation. Uncle Red Nose Mike has just asked a riddle, which none of us can guess. But you can, so get up and try."

Scratchfoot yawned and then said, "Mr. Mike, what is your riddle? I will try my hand at it. What is it?"

"What kind of a cravat would our friend Mr. Hog be most likely to choose?" said Red Nose

Mike, then added: "I have offered a prize of those six worms I found just now to the one that tells me what it is."



HEN CASTLE.

"That is very easy. Have these people, sensible too they call themselves, been trying so long to guess that riddle? Hand over your

worms, Mr. Mike, for I know it," said Scratchfoot after a little thought.

"The worms come after the riddle," said Mike.

"The answer is a pig's tie."

"Right, and here are the worms!"

Then after receiving many congratulations Scratchfoot ate the worms.

LATER, IN THE HENHOUSE.

"Mrs. Henny Penny, why do you insist on sitting on your nest forever? It is so pleasant outdoors; you might be fattening on worms instead of up here on your nest as if you were glued to it," said Scratchfoot.

"My dear, I see you do not understand."

"No, I don't understand, and only silly people say there is anything to understand in it," said Scratchfoot, interrupting Henny Penny.

"Dear, you said awhile ago that no one ought to stay in this fine weather, so I wish you would please go out."

After giving her a peck Scratchfoot left the house.

CHAPTER SECOND.

DEATH OF SCRATCHFOOT.

"O! Mr. Mike, what is that noise? O! O! Mr. Mike, it is Scratchfoot; he has fallen. See, Mr. Mike," said Brownie, one of the hens at Fowl Farm.

Red Nose Mike flew down on the floor of the henhouse. Then he gave a cry that waked all the chickens. He said, "Ladies and gentlemen, please all get together and listen to this sad news I have to tell you."

All the people assembled, and Red Nose Mike said—

"Knowing as I do that young Scratchfoot, of our beloved Fowl Farm, has gotten up such a reputation, not only for finding the nicest, fattest worms, not only for guessing riddles or telling the best stories, but for fighting off any rooster that does harm to the people, I wish to break the dreadful news as best I can that Scratchfoot is dead!"

Every hen and every rooster drew out their kerchiefs and freely the tears fell. It was dawn before any of them stopped crying. Then preparations were made to bury Scratchfoot. Every chicken went ; even Henny Penny left her eggs long enough to go.

That night every one was weak with crying and Topknot had cried herself sick.

CHAPTER THIRD.

FOWL FARM.

Fowl Farm was once owned by a farmer named Gray, but when Mr. Gray died he left his farm to a friend who cared nothing at all about it, and never took the trouble to go to it or to sell it or to send any one else to it. So once, nearly five years after Mr. Gray's death, some half dozen travelling hens and roosters found it, and after coming to the conclusion that it was as much theirs as any one's, they took possession of it and have kept it ever since.

Here are the names of the hens :—

Lady Gray, Henny Penny, Fluffie, Speckle, Mrs. Bluehen, Topknot, Brownie, Eatwell, Stuffie, Cockletop, Swellhead, Tiptoe, Highhead, Julia, Charcoal, Glover, Bluie, Longlegs, and Bigfoot.

Here are the names of the roosters :—

Red Nose Mike, Lazybones, Long Nose Bill.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

THE PARTY.

"Mr. Long Nose, have you been for the mail?" asked Cockletop, as Long Nose was returning from a walk.

"Yes," answered Bill, "I called. Only a letter for Lady Gray, though. Here, Lazybones, take this to the lady."

Lazybones never objected to taking mail to Lady Gray, because she always gave him something.

That night Lady Gray's maid came to the second henhouse and handed a folded paper to Red Nose Mike. He opened it and read :—

"*Mr. Mike:*

"DEAR SIR:—I wish all of you to come to Hen Castle at eight o'clock to-night.

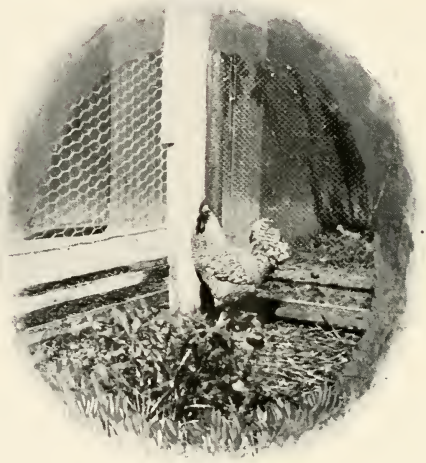
"LADY GRAY."

Red Nose called all the people together and read aloud the note. They all, except Henny

Penny, said they would go. Then Mike seated himself at the table and wrote :—

"*Lady Gray:*

"DEAR MADAM:—We will all be very glad to come to the Castle to-night at the appointed



RED NOSE MIKE.

hour. Mrs. H. Penny says you really must excuse her though, as she is setting.

"Respectfully,

"R. N. MIKE."

This answer met with great approval in the henhouse, and at seven o'clock every hen was getting out her silk dresses and saying what they looked best in.

Promptly at eight every one was at the Castle. Lady Gray met them in the garden and said :—

"I received by to-day's mail a very kind invitation to go to a party over at Chicken Place. You were all invited. It is to be to-morrow, from seven in the evening until one in the morning. All who wish to go will oblige me by saying 'I.' "

Every one said "I." Then the chickens left to get ready for the party.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

Henny Penny.

"After the thing was all over and the company leaving, Lady Featherly gave each of us an orange or an apple," said Speckle to Henny Penny the day after the party. "Don't you wish you had been there?"

"Yes, my dear, and I could have gone for half an hour, if I had not to go out buying that house to-day. I may have to be gone some time, but the only thing I mind is about my eggs. I am afraid they will get cold." Henny sighed as she spoke.

"Could I take your place?"

"I would be very much obliged, my dear."

"Then I will," said Speckle. "What time do you go?"

"Red Nose Mike will be ready at half-past four this afternoon," Henny said.

Speckle was ready at the time set by Henny, who soon found a house and was back in an hour's time.

We must now hear something of Henny Penny. She is one of the oldest and sweetest hens at Fowl Farm. She was a small chicken when the travelling hens and roosters settled at the farm. She is respected by every decent chicken that ever saw her. The remark is everywhere, "What a nice lady that Mrs. Henny Penny is!"

CHAPTER SIXTH.

TOPKNOT GOES AWAY.

"Topknot, the doctor says go away for a month or so, and as old Miss Guinea has asked you often to come to see her you may as well go now," said Long Nose Bill as he came in. He had been to see the doctor about Topknot, who was sick. "I know, Mr. Bill, I am very much obliged to you for having called on Doctor Fixit for me. I suppose I will have to go at once if Miss Guinea wants me now."

Topknot wrote and heard in a day or so, saying Miss Guinea would be very glad to see her any time she would come. So Monday morning found Top, as the people called her, at the Guinea Place.

She stayed a month and came back as well as ever.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

A LITTLE FUSS.

"Well, I hope he will get it done by Spring," said Red Nose Mike. He had been giving Lazybones some instructions about digging sweet potatoes, which he had offered to pay him for.

"I hope he will too," said Henny Penny.

"You all ought not to be so hard on Lazybones. You know the circumstances."

"O hush, Speckle. You are always taking up for Lazybones."

"What did you say about circumstances, Speckle?" asked Stuffie.

"We were talking about Lazybones, Stuff," said Mrs. Bluehen. "We were rather too hard on him, and Speck said we knew the circumstances."

"What sort of circumstances, Speck?"

"Stuff," said Speck, "I did not know you were here, and you raised Lazybones. I was

going to explain the circumstances, but I had rather not as you are here."

"Do you mean that I raised Lazybones to be lazy?"

"I do, Stuff."

"Am I lazy?"

"I think so."

"Why dare you say that, miss?"

"Why did you ask me?"

"Because I wanted to know."

"I said what I thought, Stuff."

"O, hush up, Stuffie ; don't talk so to Speckle. Ask a reasonable question and answer reasonably," said Mike.

"Very well, Mr. Mike," said Stuffie, who, truth to tell, was afraid of Red Nose.

The end of it was that Stuffie, being so mad, got the worst of it. She went to her nest to mope the rest of the day.

Lady Gray heard how nicely Speckle behaved. She sent and asked her to dine at the Castle. You may be sure Speck went.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

A LITTLE FUN.

"High! high! for the first cold day. It makes me feel good," said Long Nose Bill on the tenth of December.

"What shall we do to-day?" asked Fluffie.

"Suppose we get the sleds and go to the hill!"

"What for?"

"To slide, of course, Fluff."

"Are we all going?"

"That is just what I want to find out."

Long Nose Bill got up and made this speech:

"Ladies and Gentlemen of Fowl Farm: Please, your attention for a second.

"We ought not to let such a fine snow-storm go by without going over to the hill. The sleds are all in order, and I move we lose no time in going over to the hill. We could spend an hour or so very pleasantly in

sliding. All who are of my opinion will oblige me by saying 'I.'"

With this fine speech, as Fluffie called it, Bill sat down.

All the people said "I," so at once they started. What a good time they had! Once Speckle disappeared, but soon Red Nose Mike saw her head sticking up out of a snowbank.

After awhile they went home. The close of a short December afternoon was upon them before they reached the house.

"Mr. Mike," said Brownie, as they walked home together, "let's tell some stories to-night!"

"Very well; I am willing if the others are."

The others were not only willing but glad, so after supper they began.

CHAPTER NINTH.

CHAT AND NEWS.

All and every one of Fowl Farm on a cold Winter afternoon were seated in the sitting room at the second hen house. Lady Gray and Lady Featherly had come in to spend a sociable afternoon, as they said. Lady Featherly had her embroidery, Lady Gray her knitting. The others were sewing.

"Mrs. Penny, may I ask what article of dress you are making?" asked Lady Featherly.

"Only hemstitching an apron, lady."

"May I see it?"

"Certainly."

Henny unfolded, as she spoke, a beautiful apron. It was embroidered in forget-me-nots, which were sprinkled over it. Fluffie laughed and told Speckle afterwards that Lady Featherly nearly had a fit when she saw it. For she said :—

"O, Mrs. Penny, how beautiful. Thought you

did not embroider." Then turning to Lady Gray, "Look here, Cousin Gray, see how lovely this is."

A GROUP IN THE YARD.

Soon every one was admiring Henny's work.

"May I ask who you are making it for, Mrs. Penny?"

"For sale."

"How much do you ask?"

"Five dollars!"

"I will buy it then. I will pay you now."

Looking in her purse she drew forth an eight dollar bill, handed it to Henny, and said:—

"Mrs. Penny, here is a bill for your apron. When you finish it please send it to my home at Chicken Place. I hope it is right. Is it?"

"Why, my dear lady, it is too right. I only asked five dollars for the apron. You have given me eight."

"Five dollars is not enough for such exquisite work. So please accept eight."

"Why, thank you very much, my dear lady," said Henny.

"Fluffie, dear, you look badly. What is the matter?" asked Lady Gray about an hour later.

"I feel rather badly, too, Lady Gray. I think we have been having too much fuss down here. I will try to stay in my nest more."

"Fluffie, I want to ask you and Henny and Speck up to the Castle if you will come," said Lady Gray.

"If we will come! We certainly will. We will be delighted to come to the Castle on a visit."

"Fluffie, I don't want you on a visit. I want you there to live. How would you like that?" asked Lady Gray.

"O, my dearest lady. Do you mean it?"

"Yes, I certainly mean it."

CHAPTER TENTH.

TROUBLE AT FOWL FARM.

"Squark! squark! squark!" went Stuffie, Highhead, Longlegs, and Bigfoot. It was just after the clock had struck for midnight. Red Nose Mike woke up to find the door open and some one, he could not tell who, standing there with the people in his hand. He was reaching for Charcoal. Mike at once woke Charcoal and the rest of them escaped. Soon the person, whom Red Nose Mike could see was not a chicken, disappeared.

"O! O! where are they? Who was it? O! Cousin Red Nose!" said Eatwell.

"No time for this, Eatwell," said Mrs. Bluehen. "Mr. Bill, Mr. Bill, where are you?"

"Right here, putting on my overcoat. I must go up to the Castle and warn the people of the danger," answered Bill.

"Yes, I was just going to say you ought to go."

Bill was gone. Did he ever reach the Castle? We will see.

As soon as he got outside the door the first

THE TRAMP.

thing Bill did was to put his ear down to the ground. But he heard nothing. Then on he went. But no, his legs would not carry him

fast enough. He flew. At last the Castle came in sight. How was he to get in? He knew. There was a porch, a top porch, and Lady Gray's bay window opened into it. Bill flew on the porch and commenced pecking on the window.

Lady Gray was easy to wake. She was soon at the window. She raised it and said :—

"Mr. Bill, what do you mean? This is rather late to pay calls."

"O, lady, it is not a call. I came to tell you that serious trouble has come to dear Fowl Farm," said Bill.

Lady Gray was a person not easily frightened, so she said :—

"I hope it is not as serious as you think ; but what is it?"

"My dear madam, a tramp came to our house and stole Stuffie, Highhead, Longlegs, and Bigfoot. Dear lady, he may come here, so please send out to see if he has left the farm."

This was too much for Lady Gray. She fainted.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

LADY GRAY'S ILLNESS.

"How is the lady this morning?" asked Red Nose Mike the next day.

"Worse!" said Brownie, who was a trained nurse.

Mike sighed. "Is there anything I can do?" he asked.

"Yes, go for Doctor Fixit. She won't hear of a doctor coming, but——"

Red Nose Mike was gone before she could say more. An hour and a half later Brownie, Henny, and the doctor were on the Castle porch.

"What do you think, doctor?" asked Henny.

"My dear madam, she has been worked up and is very badly off. She must be kept very quiet. Those powders I left on the table must be taken the last thing before going to bed and the first thing in the morning. She must eat nothing. Make her some beef tea."

"How often must she take that?" asked Brownie.

"Every four hours. If she wants it break up a cracker in it. Good morning; I will see you in the afternoon." The doctor left.

"Fluffie," said Brownie, "go lay down; see if you can catch a minute's sleep. You will be sick next."

Fluffie went to her room and laid down. Lady Gray had been sick a week now, and though she was a little better to-day she was far from being well.

While she lay there the doctor came up to the door.

Up she jumped and went to open the door.

"How is she, Miss Fluffie?"

"About the same." As Fluffie spoke she and the doctor went across the hall to Lady Gray's room. The doctor went in.

In a few minutes Speckle came in Fluffie's room and said :—

"Fluff, the doctor says Lady Gray will soon be well. She is now very much better than we thought."

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"Yes, Speck, I heard him say so before I came in here."

Two weeks later Lady Gray was down on the porch. She still looked thin and pale, but now would soon be well.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

A STORY.

"Fluffie, come here; I have some news," said Lady Gray three years after the stealing of Stuffie, Highhead, Longlegs, and Bigfoot. Lady Featherly had long ago returned to Chicken Place. Everything had gone on quietly at Fowl Farm.

"What is your news, lady?" asked Fluffie.

"You remember, Fluff," said the lady, "that visit we made over at Beauty Spot?"

"Yes."

"You remember Tanglelegs?"

"Yes."

"Well, she wants to come up for the Winter."

"My dear lady, we don't want her up here," said Fluff.

"So I think, but we can't tell her not to come. Mrs. Bluehen has a house full. She can't take her."

"I have an idea, lady. You know Blackie

and Tiptoe are in the old house. Why couldn't she go with them?"

"Just it. I will write to Tangle now."

"Cousin Mike," said Tanglelegs, a day after her arrival at Fowl Farm, "it is a very hot afternoon. We can't sleep. Won't you please tell a story?"

"Well, yes. What do you want to hear?" asked Red Nose.

"Anything."

"Well, one morning about nine years ago, when we were young, we belonged to a family who lived about fifteen miles from here. They had all kinds of fowls, turkeys, ducks, and everything. One night our mistress came with her maid and examined us closely. She decided she had too many chickens, so half a dozen of us were stopped up ready to be sold in the morning. After awhile other chickens came to talk to us and we found out a way to get out.

"We sent for our friend the dog, or as we called him, Sir Dixie. He came. We asked him to stand up on his hind legs and push the door of the box we were in with his nose

and then we could fly out. Sir Dixie was very glad to help us, so we soon got out, but we could not stay there any longer, for of course

SIR DIXIE TO THE RESCUE.

it was not safe. So we started out, and after awhile reached Fowl Farm. And we have, as you see, been here ever since."

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

WEDDINGS, SONGS, A PICNIC.

Lady Gray had a great many visitors that Winter. One, Mr. Long Neck Cock, who she had known for years, was spending the Winter with her. Cock and Speckle got to be great friends.

The Winter was almost over, but March winds did not, as expected, blow Cock away.

In April, Julia married Red Nose Mike, who died in a week after the wedding.

April was gone, and the first day of the lovely month of May came. Cock still remained at the Castle.

On the fifth of May cards were sent out to all their friends announcing the marriage of Miss Speckle and Mr. L. N. Cock. The wedding took place on the fifteenth.

Lady Gray made them the present of a house very near the Castle.

In honor of the occasion Julia and Glover got up a picnic. Every one went. They had a very

good time. As the day was drawing to a close and every one had assembled to go home Long Nose Bill commenced singing this song in honor of Julia and Glover :—

"Miss Julie was a chicken of the old blue hen :
The way she 'fit' it was a sin.
She boxed my ears and sot 'em a ringing,
She never said a word, but she went along a singing.
O, Miss Julie Glover, my true lover,
Stuck in the mud and can't turn over.
O, Miss Julie G-l-o-v-e-r !"

Eight years have now passed. All is as usual at Fowl Farm. Lady Gray is dead. But Lady Fluffie almost equals her in everything.

Dear old Henny Penny is just the same Henny Penny we left some years ago. She, of course, is much older.

Speckle and her rooster, as Lady Fluff says, have a large and constantly increasing family, which now numbers fifteen. But in spite of all these changes we can say with Mrs. Bluehen, Fowl Farm is just the same old Fowl Farm and never can be anything else.

[THE END.]